

GERMAN DEFENSE COLLAPSED IN THIRD AND FINAL PHASE OF MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLE

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forces, particularly since the middle of October, by the extreme difficulties of the attack, had, at all events, made it possible to bring up in force and with ample ammunition the artillery of all calibers, as well as generally to improve communications and the transportation of supplies of every kind.

The result was that when the artillery preparation was laid for the general attack of November 1, it was of a volume and destructive intensity exceeding even that of September 26. Apart from the potent influence exercised upon the situation on the American front by the progress of the Allied armies on both of its flanks, the mere power of this bombardment, brought to bear upon the German defenses, had the effect of breaking the enemy's line already pierced in many places and badly shaken everywhere—would probably have resulted in a complete break through of the German front.

At the events, the enemy's artillery reaction to the bombardment was surprisingly feeble, and when the infantry attack went forward at dawn on the morning of November 1, it was met by a line of machine guns, which had been placed as pivots for the central divisions, and which were soon enabled to advance by the rapid progress of the latter.

The 2nd Division, which had been put in line for the specific purpose of carrying the center forward rapidly, making the most remarkable first day's progress of any of the divisions by advancing about eight kilometers. A few seriously alarmed German divisions were the forward drive of this salient was evidenced by the fact that on the 3rd, despite the desperate efforts of their forces, they had thrown back the divisions in against it. But their efforts, at last, were expiring ones and all to no avail. Their front was irretrievably broken, and henceforth during the day they were driven rapidly north and east to beyond the Meuse by a power which they could no longer resist.

Fifth Crosses the Meuse
Looking very briefly, as we have heretofore, at the American progress by divisions during the last victorious drive, it is interesting to note how swiftly the 5th Division, which had been in the line since the 4th and 3rd Divisions, in the bitterly contested woods and along the hill crests around Brieulles, finally advanced across the Meuse, striking toward Montmédy, at a rate which would have speedily brought it astride the Metz-Mézières railroad line there, had the armistice not intervened. The division, which had been in the line since the 4th and 3rd Divisions, in the bitterly contested woods and along the hill crests around Brieulles, finally advanced across the Meuse, striking toward Montmédy, at a rate which would have speedily brought it astride the Metz-Mézières railroad line there, had the armistice not intervened.

On the evening of the 4th, other detachments of the 60th, rushing the foot bridges and laying other made of telegraph poles, crossed the river, and reached them and penetrated the edge of the Bois de Châtillon, beyond the canal, in spite of the fact that the bridges had been destroyed and the river to pieces as fast as they were placed. However, a bridgehead was now firmly established. The next night the bulk of the 10th Infantry Brigade was over the river and the canal, and on the 5th the Bois de Châtillon and the village of Villers were taken by the 60th, enabling the French on the right—the 15th Division of Colonel Lejeune—to advance, while the 11th Infantry took Liny-devant-Dun and the first took Dun-sur-Meuse and Milly, all east of the river, beyond which the division now had a front of over eight kilometers.

Resistance Only Slight
The progress from now on was rapid, and it was made against only slight resistance. Across a rolling country and through a succession of small villages, the advance continued, taking Liny-devant-Dun on the 6th and Brandeville on the 7th. Moving in detachments which marched along the river, the 10th Division, on the left, and the 11th on the right, occupied Loupy, Jametz and Mouzay, establishing at the last named place a bridgehead, for the 10th Division, and bringing into the town food for 700 destitute French civilians who were gathered there. On the 10th, the southwestern part of the large Fort de Woevre, within a dozen kilometers of Montmédy, was captured, and at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 11th the troops were progressing rapidly toward that town in the northern part of the front.

On the morning of November 1, the 90th Division advanced at the jump-off with the 35th Infantry on the right and the 36th on the left. The 35th, which had been in the advance was north gradually tending toward the Meuse, and before night Acreville, on the right, and Andevanne, on the left, had both been occupied. The following day, the 35th and 36th Divisions, having taken the front line, Villers-devant-Dun was occupied, and by the afternoon of the 3rd the whole line had pushed through the Bois de Châtillon, beyond the village of Villers, and had occupied the edge of the bluffs overlooking the river.

Orders were now given to force the crossings of the Meuse by the advance parties found the permanent bridges all blown up, and encountered heavy machine gun and artillery fire from the east of the river, so that, although numerous efforts were made by patrols, no crossing was effected until November 10.

Path Cleared for 89th
So effective was the preliminary bombardment and the accompanying barrage upon the German front north of the Bois de Banterville, in the sector of the 89th Division, that when the latter attacked, the 35th and 36th Infantry on the right and the 35th, the 35th and the 35th in the order named, most of the German machine gunners were killed or captured in their positions before they could get their guns into action.

On this part of the front, it will be remembered, the Kriemhilde Stellung had been entirely broken through in the vicinity of Romagne, so that now nothing more than hastily improvised positions had to be overcome. It is true that on the next series of ridges, and in the Bois de Banterville, the 89th and 90th Divisions, in the center encountered fragments of still another defense line, called the Freye Stellung, but it was too far from complete to be of any formidable value. The 89th Division, after a brief fight, was driven back, and the 90th Division was driven back.

rather heavy at the beginning of the attack, but it diminished rapidly in volume, and, though elements of ten different German divisions were reported in front before noon and though a heavy fog which came up early in the afternoon made it difficult to keep liaison between the several units, progress was nevertheless rapid, and by evening the front extended through the Bois de Barcourt, about five kilometers north of the line of departure. Remonville had been captured during the day.

The resumption of the advance next morning was somewhat delayed and the enemy's resistance, both by machine guns and artillery, was heavier, but the line pushed steadily ahead by the progress of detachments, and at 9 a.m. the ridge had entered Tilly and the left was in possession of Nourm, nearly on the edge of the hills overlooking the valley of the Meuse, while the center was still held back by determined resistance of machine guns in Barcourt.

The division was now rather widely scattered over its sector and most of its artillery had been unable to keep up with the rapid advance, but Gen. William H. Wright, commanding, did not desire relief by the 1st Division, which was close behind, and during the following day the enemy's resistance was broken, and the division was attained by the capture of Remonville on the right and of the Bois de Barcourt on the left.

Fire Delays Crossing
Taking Beaufort and pushing through the Forêt de Dieulet and the Forêt de Jaulnay on the 4th and 5th, the division occupied positions along the Meuse from Lancyville, opposite Stenay on the right, to the bank of the river across from Pouilly, on the left. But these positions were not seized soon enough to prevent the enemy from destroying the bridges, and his fire from the hills across from Pouilly was sufficiently severe to prevent any crossing during the succeeding four days. During the night of the 5th detachments rushed across the west of Pouilly and obtained prisoners and information, and the following night the Engineers threw across the river at this point two foot bridges and a catamaran ferry on which by 9:30 p.m. the 2nd Division, with its artillery, were going over for a night attack on Pouilly. They surprised the garrison in the cellars of the town, where they had sought refuge from the shelling, took many prisoners, and pushed on northeastward up the river, beyond several kilometers beyond Pouilly when the armistice came into effect.

On the morning of the 6th, the 90th Division on the south of Stenay, one platoon of the 89th also got over into the north of that town from Lancyville on the morning of the 5th. The 90th Division, which had been in the line since the 4th and 3rd Divisions, in the bitterly contested woods and along the hill crests around Brieulles, finally advanced across the Meuse, striking toward Montmédy, at a rate which would have speedily brought it astride the Metz-Mézières railroad line there, had the armistice not intervened.

Through the Kriemhilde Stellung
The two hours' artillery preparation laid by the 1st and 2nd Field Artillery Brigades, the machine guns of the 2nd and 42nd Divisions and the projectors and Stokes mortars of Company D, of the 1st Division, were directed against the German defenses, and the 2nd Infantry on the right, the 6th Marines in the center and the 6th Marines on the left, with the 5th Division, which had been in the line since the 4th and 3rd Divisions, in the bitterly contested woods and along the hill crests around Brieulles, finally advanced across the Meuse, striking toward Montmédy, at a rate which would have speedily brought it astride the Metz-Mézières railroad line there, had the armistice not intervened.

On the right, the 89th Division was well up, in the Bois de Barcourt; on the left, the 80th Division, held back by violent opposition in the woods south of Allipont, was not up, and detachments from the 2nd crossed into its sector and seized, for purposes of temporary flank protection, the woods north and west of Silvy. The following day, owing to the rain, the corps plans, which first contemplated an attack by troops of the 2nd Division on Buzancy, in the 80th Division sector, and later directed a resumption of the advance on the original objectives, the total progress was slight compared to that of the first day. But the Stenay-Buzancy road was crossed and the Bois de Poile occupied, and during the night the whole division advanced to the road between Nourm and Fosse, which had been assigned originally as the exploitation line of the first day's advance.

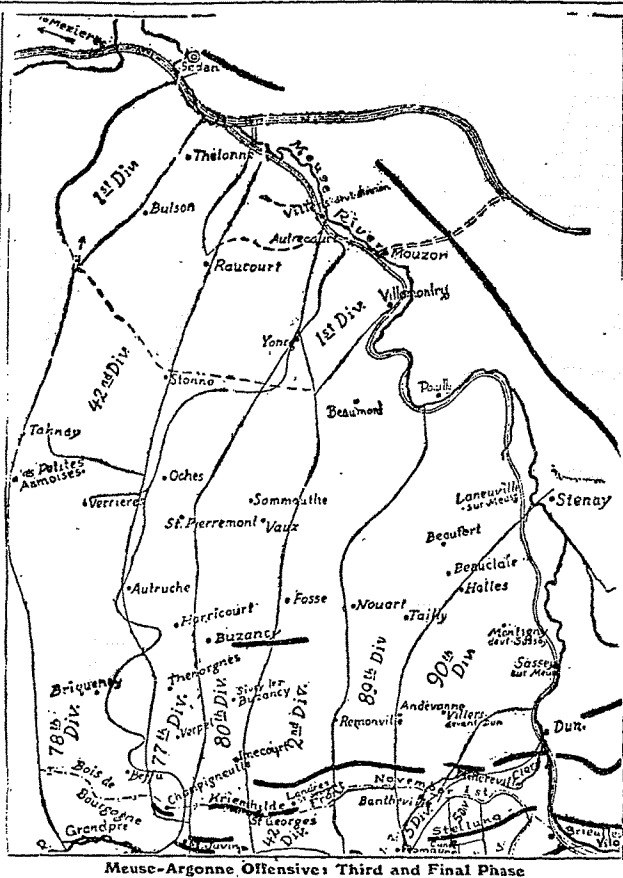
Echo of Civil War Days
The division now faced a large tract of forested hills with a single road leading northward through them to Beaufort and the open country around it, overlooking the valley of the Meuse and after darkness had fallen on the evening of the 3rd, a novel maneuver was undertaken, saving of the daring raids of the American Civil War.

Through the pouring rain of that black night, the battalion of the 9th Infantry, marching in columns of twos, and one battalion of the 2nd Infantry, in the lead, a company of infantry a few hundred yards ahead as advance guard, moved rapidly up the single road, capturing German machine gunners asleep in their places and other sleeping Germans at La Fosse and La Tuillerie Farms. Just before midnight the Americans occupied strong natural positions in the neighborhood of La Tuillerie Farm, commanding Beaufort.

During the remainder of the night these positions were strengthened and rendered defensible and in the morning the enemy was astonished to find the Americans firmly established there, six kilometers behind his main defensive line in the woods, where he had hoped to delay the advance while making good his retreat across the Meuse. There was nothing for him to do except move out as speedily as possible, which he did, the advanced troops of the 2nd Division holding their position during the day of the 4th and being rapidly reinforced.

The flank divisions, thus relieved of opposition, came to rapidly on the line and that night the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Division, repeating the maneuver, advanced passing around the outskirts of Beaufort, and at daybreak of the 5th occupied Lancyville, on the bank of the Meuse, while the right flank took possession of the Bois de la Vache, which commanded, at a distance of about two kilometers, the village of Pouilly, in the sector of the 89th Division.

Woods Cleaned Up
How unprepared the Germans were for such rapid movements was witnessed by the fact that the entire platoon of machine gunners was captured, and the line underwent inspection preparatory to changing position. The river bank was cleared of the enemy and after daybreak a detachment of the 2nd Infantry went back and mopped up Beaufort.



Meuse-Argonne Offensive, Third and Final Phase

Bois de Fond de Limon and the village of Villers-devant-Dun, all lying between the Meuse and the road to Mouzon along which the 1st Division would advance.

Next morning the 1st Division, passed, in security, and during the succeeding three days the 2nd Division held the positions already attained along the river. On the night of the 10th, the 2nd Engineers threw two foot bridges across at the Bois de l'Espece, and two battalions of the 5th Marines, with two machine gun companies went over to the east bank under heavy fire, followed by a battalion of the 89th Division, to establish combat liaison with that division to the right.

The Marines wasted no time on the morning of the 11th, but promptly seized the Bois des Planches, near their crossing place, and spreading north, east and south from there, took Warmonterrie and Senegal Farms and the Farm Vigneron, and made connection with the 89th Division near the latter place and Autreville. When hostilities were suspended at 11 o'clock, therefore, though the division had first set foot across the river only a few hours before, it already had a bridgehead established about four kilometers in breadth along the stream and from one to three kilometers in depth. The division for dash which it had made at Beaufort and the Bois de Belleau was thus well sustained by the 2nd Division up to the very end.

On the 12th, the 2nd Division, in the line due to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, in the Kriemhilde Stellung, between St. Georges and Champigneulle, the 80th Division advanced with the 31st Infantry on the right and the 32nd on the left. The break through the enemy's hitherto impregnable front was promptly accomplished, but immediately afterward the

occasionally became serious, during the following two days the division progressed through Vaux-en-Dieulet, Sommeaume and the Bois de Four into the Bois des Ponts Gerache. From this line at 2:30 o'clock on the morning of the 5th, the right marched on Beaumont, and at 6:30 a.m. reached that town, excepting one battalion, which struck north to the Beaumont-Stonne road at La Thibaudie farm, north of which, about 9 a.m., it was checked by machine gun fire.

Meanwhile, the 31st Infantry, on the left, had put in a hard night fighting its way north through the Bois de Pierremont, the Bois de la Barrière and the Bois des Grande Dieulet, reaching the road west of La Thibaudie farm, however, about 9 p.m. in the morning. The next night the front went forward to a line extending from the north edge of Beaumont to a point just north of Yoncq, on which line at 6:30 a.m. of the 6th, the 1st Division, leaping forward, advanced elements of the 80th Division and pushed on rapidly toward Mouzon, the 80th Division retiring for rest to the vicinity of Cornay.

Enemy Turned in Ravine
It was not altogether unfamiliar ground which the 77th Division occupied on coming into line for the second time in front of Champigneulle, for it was quite near to the front line from which it had retired on October 15. The German positions in Champigneulle and the ravine just east of it, leading up from the Agnon river into the sector of the 80th Division, were very formidable and the preliminary bombardment did not reduce them.

The plan of the divisional command for enveloping the troublesome ravine by passing troops around it through the 80th Division sector was not accomplished the first day, and little progress was made. But on November 2 the 36th Infantry flanked and cleared the ravine, and got to the Moulin de Champigneulle, a kilometer up the river north of the village, completely turning the enemy out of his positions.

Thereafter progress was rapid, and at nightfall of the 2nd the front was on the road between Buzancy and Harcourt. During the following days much artillery and machine gun resistance was encountered, but, with the constant and skillful assistance of batteries of 75 and 155 millimeter guns following in close support, the infantry pushed its way on through St. Pierremont, Oches, Stenay, La Bussière and Flaba, and after overcoming especially strong opposition in and around Raucourt, Harcourt and Autreville, found itself at 6 p.m. of November 6 on the heights overlooking the Meuse just above Sedan.

Fighting all night, the division completely cleared these heights within its sector and even threw patrols across the river near Villers-devant-Mouzon. The Engineers promptly got foot bridges across, and at nightfall on the 7th one battalion of the 80th Infantry was over and occupying the heights above Ambion.

Their position here, however, was considered too hazardous by the First Corps command, and they were withdrawn, pa-

trols only remaining on the east bank, while the division held the other shore in force, from the edge of Mouzon to Pont Maugis, three kilometers above Sedan, until the morning of the armistice.

In accordance with the general plan, the artillery of the 78th Division prepared for the attack of November 1 on the previous day by soaking the eastern edge of the Bois de Bourgogne with spirit gas. Though they did not attack the edge of the forest when they went over next morning, the 30th and 31st Infantry had a very hard time, nevertheless, owing to the failure of the 77th Division to take Champigneulle that day.

Bois des Loges Taken at Last

At evening these two regiments were still south of the Bois des Loges, having suffered very severe losses, despite the fact that the 21st Infantry, to their left, had lent all the assistance possible by forcing its way into the gap between the Bois de Bourgogne and the northeastern edge of the Bois des Loges. But after midnight that night the enemy, compelled by the break through further east, began withdrawing; the 31st Infantry, on the extreme left, advanced rapidly to its first day's objective, and early in the morning the 30th and 31st Infantry went at last, straight through the deserted Bois des Loges which had balked them for so long and at such heavy cost.

Pushing northward with the bulk of their remaining combat strength, the two regiments last mentioned flanked Beuff and a few kilometers north of the Bois des Loges, took Briquigny in the afternoon and at dusk were a kilometer north of that village. On the 3rd, though the French had advanced far into the western edges of the woods the day before, efforts to get into contact with them at Boult-aux-Bois were unsuccessful because the enemy had mined and blown up the roads. But the enemy was driven back, and the French, from all the Bourgogne massif, and finally, at about noon, still driving northward, American and French patrols met at dusk, at Châtillon-sur-Bar.

Left Flank Near Bar Valley

Keeping pace with the 77th Division on its right and, like the latter, encountering only occasional resistance from isolated machine gun nests which could generally be outflanked without serious loss or delay, the 78th Division now pressed on with its left flank near the valley of the Bar river, down which the French were moving, occupying in succession Germon, Anthé, Briculles-sur-Bar, Verrières and Les Petites Armoises.

On the open hills north of the two villages last named and in the Bois de Sy, between them, the enemy made an unusually strong resistance on November 4 against which the badly exhausted troops progressed very slowly until about noon of the 5th, when, the center having just taken the woods and the village of Sy-

north of them and the left having taken Tannay and gone a kilometer and a half beyond it on the road to Chemery, the 42nd Division arrived and relieved the 78th in the pursuit.

Coming into front line at such a late hour in the pursuit, the 42nd Division had little heavy fighting, which was, certainly a novel experience for this veteran division, that had been in the battle of the Meuse-Argonne since October 14, following, as First Corps reserve, close behind the advance since the 2nd Division had attacked through its front on November 1.

Reacting now after the rapidly retreating Germans, who fought only rear-guard actions with machine guns and long-range artillery from a ridge to ride, the front was on the north edge of the Bois de Mont Dieu on the evening of November 5 and the next night extended from Chemery northeast by Buisson to the Bois de Mont Dieu, opposite Sedan. That evening orders were received from the First Corps for the 42nd Division to advance and occupy Sedan, regardless of division boundaries. When the advance was attempted it was checked by severe machine gun fire, particularly from across the river, and a patrol of the 16th Infantry, which entered the suburb of Vadelincourt, was driven back.

84th Brigade Holds Ridges

During November 7, the right flank of the 4th French Army, moving approximately down the edge of the Bar as far as Chevenegues and then following the La Chesne-Sedan national highway toward Sedan, caused the left brigade of the 42nd Division, the 83rd Brigade, to move out of line, while the 84th Brigade, on the right, continued to hold the ridges further up river. Having organized its positions here, the 42nd Division was relieved by the 77th on November 8.

The 1st Division had a final experience of active service, consisting chiefly of hard marching, for having followed and passed through the 80th Division on November 6, after a night march of 20 kilometers over very bad roads and on a rainy night, it pursued its march eight on ten kilometers after next day, exploiting the heights overlooking the Meuse from the vicinity of Villers-devant-Mouzon and Autreville.

In spite of the strenuous exertions involved in these movements, and the rush orders from the Corps the 1st Division on the night of the 6th-7th made a forced march on Sedan across the sectors of the 7th and 42nd Divisions by the road through Stenay and Chemery.

Under these orders next day the 16th Infantry reached a front just south of Sedan, the 88th Infantry, one on the hills between Vadelincourt and Chevenegues, and the 26th Infantry, one on the hill north of St. Aignan; a line which, facing northwest, was the extreme one reached by American troops on this flank and the last combat position occupied by the 1st Division.

—A.F. & A.M.—

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